

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are presented for examination. Claims 1, 2, 3, and 10 have been amended. Claims 6-9 and 12-17 remain as originally submitted.

The allowance of Applicants' Claims 13 and 17 and the indication of allowability of Applicants' Claim 11 are acknowledged with appreciation.

Objection to the Drawings:

Enclosed is a copy of the Drawings with proposed changes and additions (marked in red) made in response to the Examiner's objections.

The objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83 (a) is respectfully traversed. Please note that Applicants' Figure 8 illustrates an annular seal ring 118 that engages an internal, frustoconical surface 119 formed adjacent the face of the coupling 112. The coupling 112 is adapted to engage and compress the ring 118 to provide the external seal. Paraphrasing from Applicants' specification at page 13, line 4 *et seq*, an annular, elastomeric ring 118, having a rectangular cross section, is cemented or otherwise suitably secured to the pin 111 on the outside diameter 115. An internal, frustoconical seal surface 119 formed adjacent a face 120 of the coupling 112 is adapted to engage and compress the ring 118 to provide the external seal.

Objection To The Specification:

In response to the Examiner's objection to Claim 2, addressed under the heading "Specification", the term – body – has been inserted after the word "tubular". A similar amendment has been made in Claim 10.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C.112:

The Examiner has rejected Claim 10 and Claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, presumably on the grounds that the drawings do not illustrate the invention defined by Claims 10 and 11. This rejection is respectfully traversed even though it is moot in view of the amendment of Claim 10 to depend from Claim 6 rather than Claim

5. The Examiner's attention is directed to the description of Applicants' invention at page 13, line 4 *et seq* as discussed above.

It is further respectfully submitted that Applicants' Claims 10 and 11, which are now being rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, had been previously allowed in the prior office action.

Applicants' Claims 1-5 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,825,585 to Griffin. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As currently amended, Applicants' Claim 1 calls for pin threads extending along a frustroconical surface. The pin threads in the Griffin Patent are formed on a cylindrical surface.

Amended Claim 1 also recites an annular, inclined shoulder formed internally of the box for engagement with the inclined nose section of the pin for preventing the nose section from moving radially inwardly away from engagement with the shoulder. The corresponding pin end of Griffin is a square shoulder that is perpendicular to the joint axis.

Claim 1, as amended, further calls for an annular seal member carried in a groove within the free box end. The collar and tool joint of the Griffin Patent lacks an annular seal member carried in a groove.

Claims 2-5, which depend from Claim 1, are distinguished over the teachings of the Griffin Patent for the reasons herein advanced with regard to parent Claim 1.

Applicants' Claim 3, which depends from Claim 1, further distinguishes over the Griffin reference in calling for the stab flanks of the pin threads to have a greater inclination relative to a central axis of the connector than the load flanks of the pin threads. The threads of the Griffin device appear to be symmetrical about an axis perpendicular to the central axis of the connector.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants' Claims 1-5 are distinguishable over the teachings of the Griffin Patent and allowance of such Claims is earnestly solicited.

Applicants' Claims 6-8 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,590,357 to Feisthamel. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants' Claim 6 calls for a pin having pin threads that extend from a starting point on a tubular body with the pin threads running out on the outside diameter of the tubular body at the thread starting point. See Applicants' specification at page 10, line 10 et seq, noting that "...an important aspect of the described form of the present invention is that the seal surface 23 is formed within an external cylindrical surface 34 forming the nominal outside diameter of a major portion of the pipe section 15. The threads 25 on the pin 13 run out on a cylindrical surface 35 having a diameter no greater than the nominal diameter of the pipe surface 34. The illustrated design of Figures 1 and 2 permits the use of a non-upset pipe for the pin connection and eliminates the requirement to weld or otherwise affixed a large tubular end piece to the pipe section in order to secure a connector that can withstand the effects of dynamic loading in a corrosive environment. " The pin threads in the Feisthamel Patent extend full height to a cylindrical section that terminates in a shoulder 12.

Applicants' Claim 8, which depends from Claim 6, calls for an annular, elastomeric seal ring carried in an annular groove formed in the first tubular body. The first tubular body called for in Applicants' Claim 8 finds its closest response in the pin 2 of the Feisthamel Patent. As best illustrated in Figure 4 of Feisthamel, the annular seal ring 13 is carried in a groove (recess)10 adjacent the face of the box 4.

Similarly, with regard to Claim 12, Applicants' Claim calls for the pin to carry an annular, elastomeric seal ring adjacent the starting point of the pin threads. As noted previously, the seal ring of the Feisthamel device is carried in a box recess.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants' Claims 6-8 and 12 are distinguishable over the teachings of the Feisthamel Patent and allowance of such claims is respectfully solicited.

Applicants' Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Feisthamel. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Applicants' Claim 9 depends from Claim 6 and, it is respectfully submitted, distinguishes over

Feisthamel for the reasons hereinbefore advance regarding independent Claim 6. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants' Claim 9 is distinguishable over the Feisthamel reference and allowance of the claim is respectfully solicited.

Applicants' Claim 10 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Griffin in view of Feisthamel. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In addition to the limitations recited in parent Claim 6, Claim 10 calls for an external seal having an annular, elastomeric seal ring carried externally of the first tubular (i.e. the pin) and adapted to engage a face formed at an axial end of the box. As now amended, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 10 distinguishes over Griffin and Feisthamel in that neither reference shows a pin thread that runs out on the outside diameter of the first tubular body. It is respectfully submitted that since neither reference shows this limitation of the claim, no combination of the references teaches the limitation. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 10 distinguishes over the art of record or any appropriate combination thereof and allowance of the claim over such art is earnestly solicited.

Premature Final Rejection:

It is respectfully submitted that entry of a Final Rejection at this point in the prosecution of this application is premature.

Applicants' Claims 6-8 and 12 stand rejected, for the first time, under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) based on the reference to Feisthamel. Claim 6-8 and 12 had not been amended prior to the rejection.

Applicants' Claim 9 has been rejected, for the first time, under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) based on the reference to Feisthamel. Claim 9 had not been amended prior to the rejection.

Applicants' Claim 10 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) based on the combined teachings of Griffin and Feisthamel. Prior to the rejection, Claim 10 had not been amended.

Entry of a final rejection before Applicants have had an opportunity to respond to the information and references used in rejecting Applicants' claims unjustly denies Applicants an opportunity for review of the rejection.

Final rejections are covered by 37 CFR 1.113, stating in part:

" (a) On the second or any subsequent examination or consideration the rejection or other action may be made final..".

Applicant has not had even a single opportunity to respond to the examination of Claims 6-12 as regards the new grounds of rejection.

The M.P.E.P. at 706.07 (a) states in part:

" ... Under present practice, second or any subsequent actions on the merits shall be final, except where the Examiner introduces a new ground of rejection not necessitated by amendment of the application by Applicants, whether or not the prior art is already of record. Furthermore, a second or any subsequent action on the merits in any application or patent undergoing reexamination proceedings will not be made final if it includes a rejection, on newly cited art, of any claim not amended by Applicants or patent owner in spite of the fact that other claims may have been amended to require newly cited art." (Emphasis supplied).

In view of the foregoing argument and authority, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding Final Action be rescinded and that Applicants' claims be passed to allowance.

Mark d-Up V rsion of the Claims:

1. A connector for connecting together the free pin end and the free box end of two tubular bodies comprising:

a pin having pin threads formed externally on an end of a first tubular body, said pin threads extending along a frustoconical surface from a starting point on said first tubular body and terminating adjacent the free pin end, said pin threads further being formed on a tubular section of said first tubular body having an outside diameter no greater than an outside diameter of a major length of said first tubular body,

a pin nose at the free pin end, said pin nose having an inclined nose section,

a box having box threads formed internally on an end of a second tubular body for engagement with said pin threads, said box threads extending along a frustoconical surface from a starting point on said second tubular body and terminating adjacent the free box end,

an annular inclined shoulder formed internally of said box for engagement with said inclined nose section for preventing said inclined nose section from moving radially away from engagement with said shoulder,

[said pin adapted to be received in and threadedly engaged with said box,]

an external seal between said pin and said box adjacent said pin thread starting point and proximate [adjacent] said free box end, said external seal comprising a [frustoconical] pin seal surface formed externally of said pin, [said pin seal surface having a decreasing diameter in a direction toward the free pin end and a frustoconical box seal surface formed internally of said box, said box seal surface having an increasing Internal diameter in a direction toward the free box end, and]

an annular seal member carried in a groove within said free box end, and

an internal seal adjacent said box thread starting point and said free pin end whereby said pin threads and said box threads are confined between said external and internal seals when said pin and box are engaged.

2. A connector as defined in Claim 1 wherein said pin threads run out to an outside diameter of said first tubular body at said starting point of said pin threads.

3. A connector as defined in claim 1 wherein stab flanks of said pin threads [are] have a greater inclination relative to a central axis of said connector then load flanks of said pin threads [substantially cylindrical between said starting point of said pin threads and said free pin end].

10. A connector as defined in Claim [5] 6 wherein said external seal is an annular, elastomeric seal ring carried externally of said first tubular body and adapted to engage a face formed at an axial end of said box.

Respectfully submitted,



Carlos A. Torres
Reg. No. 24,264

Date: 8-26-02
BROWNING BUSHMAN
5718 Westheimer, Suite 1800
Houston, TX 77057
Tel.: (713) 266-5593
Fax: (713) 266-5169

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence and all referenced enclosure(s) are being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington DC 20231 on this the 26th day of August, 2002.

By: _____


Rose Ann Tisdell

FIG. 1

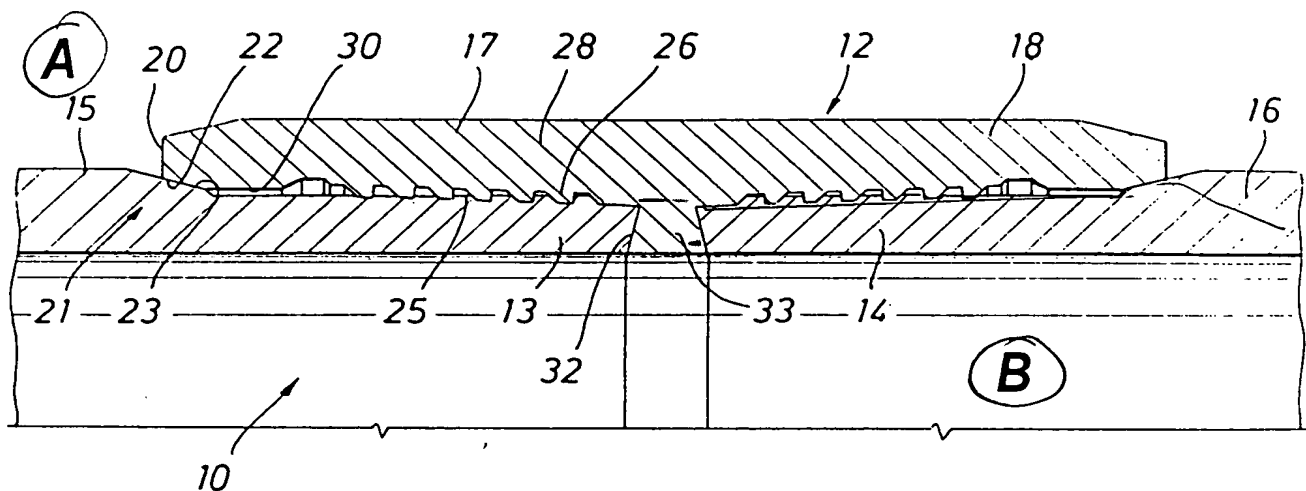


FIG. 2

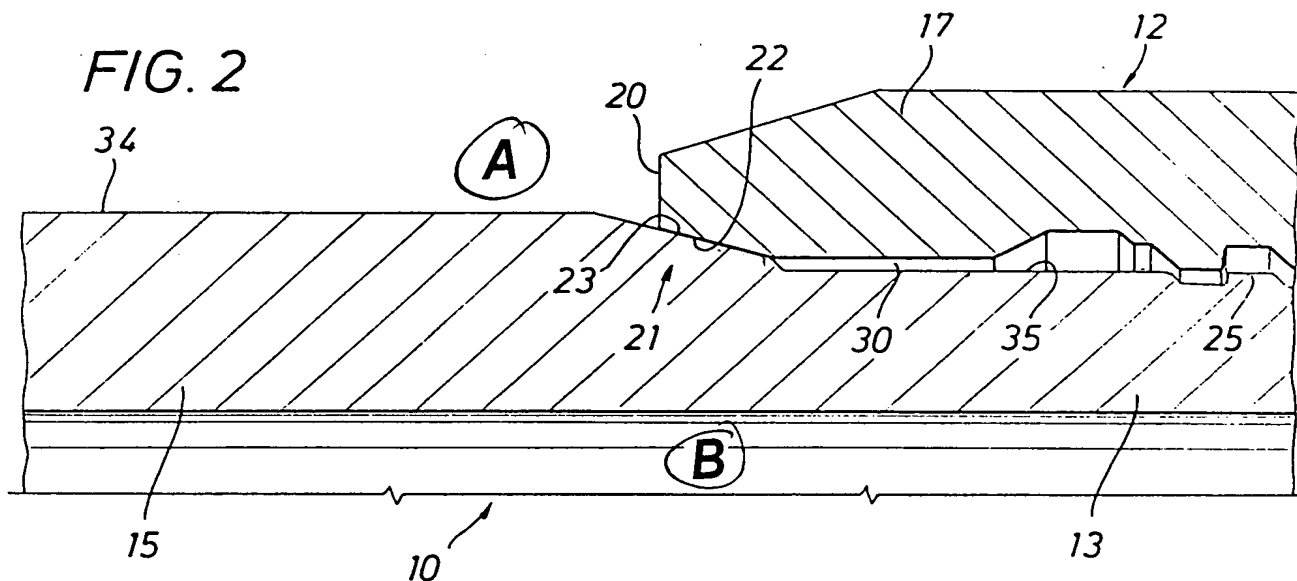
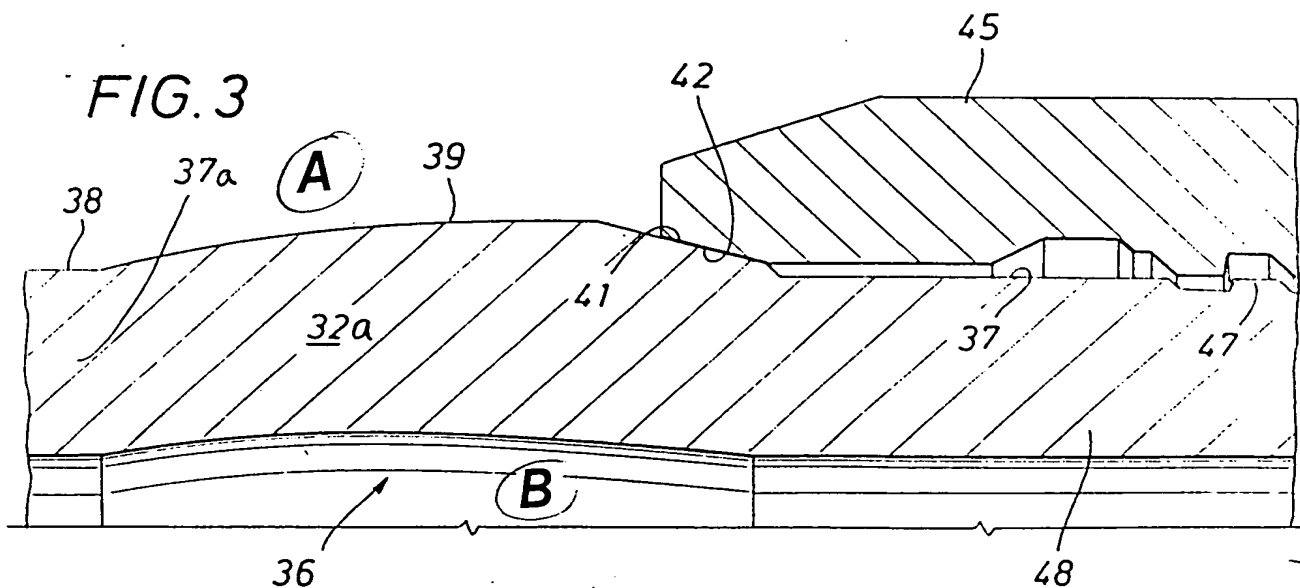


FIG. 3



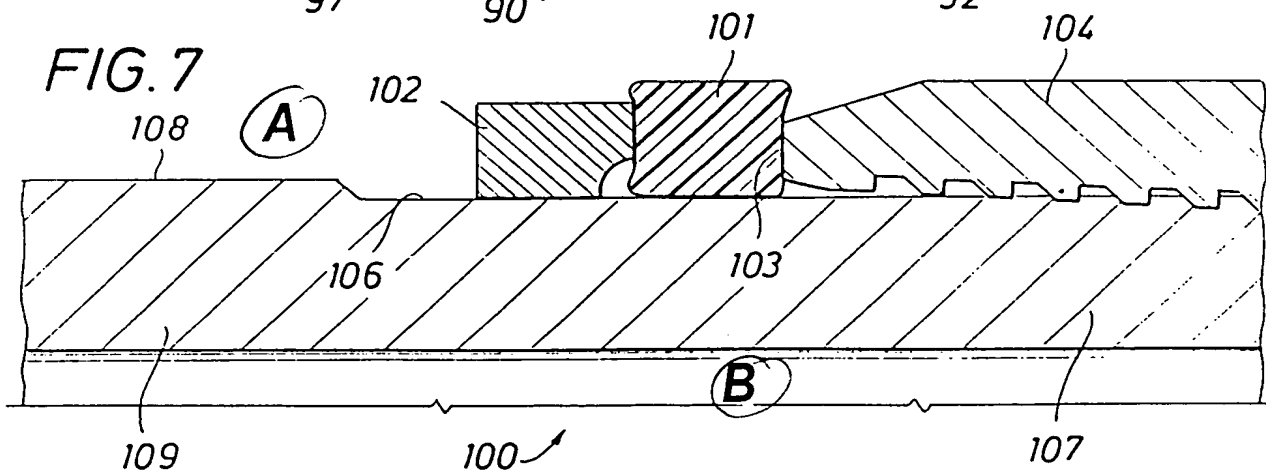


FIG. 8

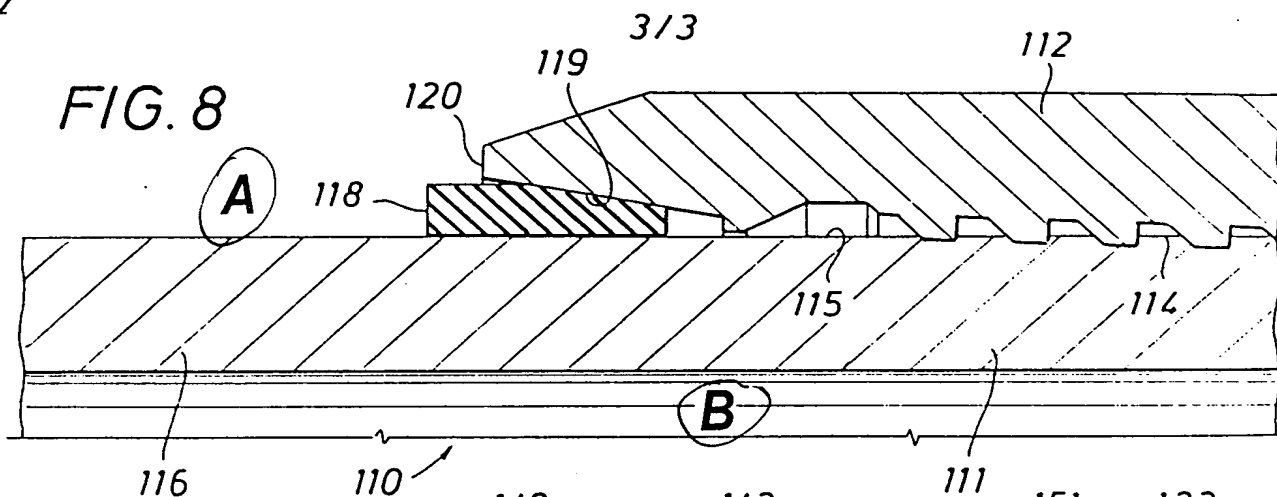


FIG. 9

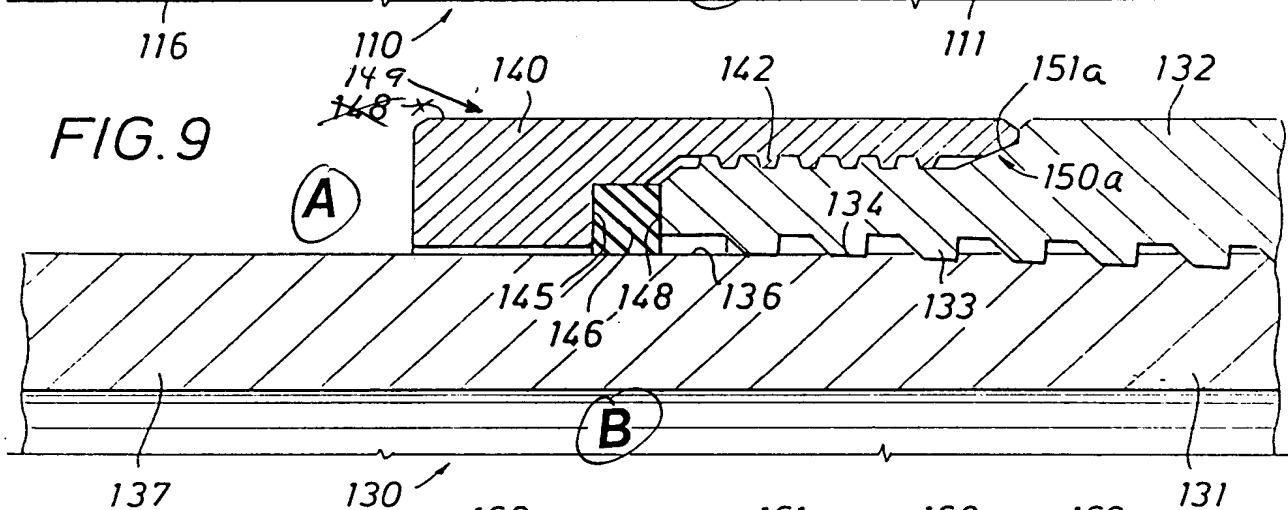


FIG. 10

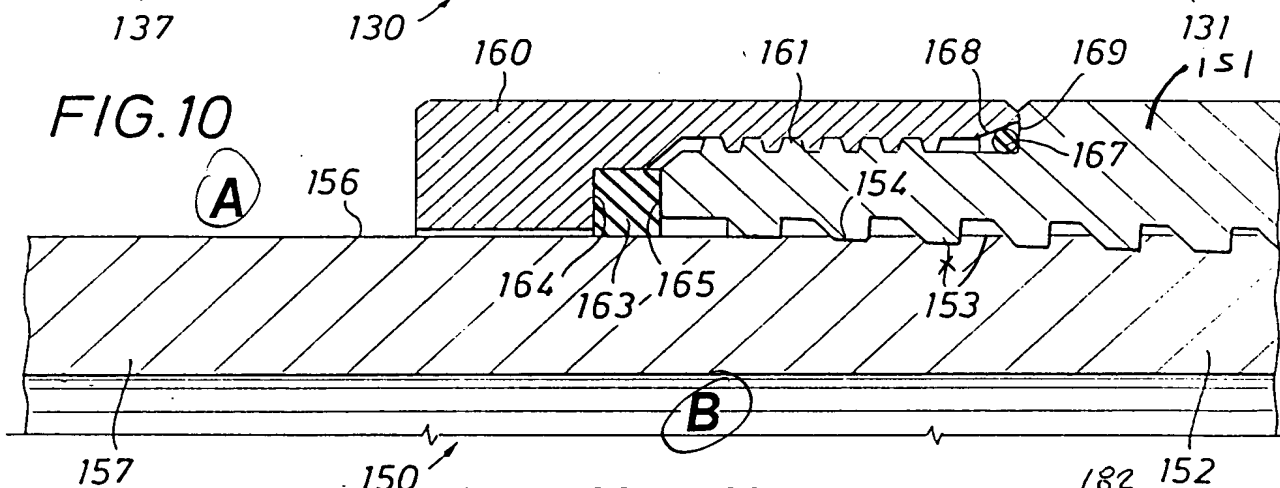


FIG. 11

